

Poetry

A Magazine of Verse

Edited by Harriet Monroe

OCTOBER 1916

Grotesques: <i>A Decoration in Black and White</i>	
	Cloyd Head 1
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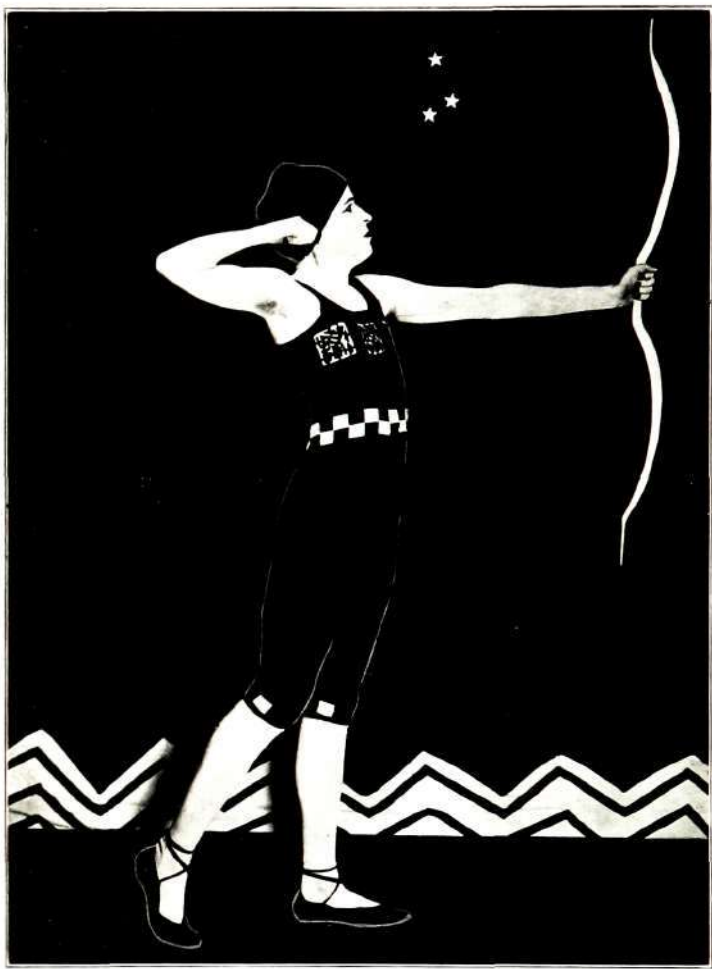
Molalla





THE WOMAN —
Alas, that I am royal!

[Pictures by courtesy of the Chicago Little Theatre.]



THE MAN —

With tread firm and taut.



GIRL—

*Who am I that come
Caressing tenderly the sign of bird?*



THE SPRITE—
Forth I follow the brook.

OCTOBER, 1916

GROTESQUES*

A Decoration in Black and White

To the memory of a clear night with stars in it: Santa Barbara, June twenty-second, nineteen-fifteen.



THE reader is seated in the theatre of his imagination. After an Overture, delicate and not without irony, the curtain between the reader and the play is drawn upward. Before him is placed a decoration in black and white, a flat conventionalized design of tall white trees upon a black background. This background is framed and occupies somewhat more than half the width of the stage. To his left, the white disc of the moon is drawn, in a clear space of black sky. Opposite, on the branch of one of the trees, is a black owl, faintly outlined. Beneath the trees, the

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zigzag convention by which the idea "brook" is visualized. A single lotus rises from this, left; and near by are the white representations of rocks.

About three feet forward from this background, extending from its edge to either side of the stage, is a frame of dark gauze, behind which droop the Grotesques, inanimate, awaiting the need of them. They have white faces lined with black, and their arms and hands are white.

Close against the background in the center stands Capulchard, master of the decoration, a sardonic figure, with long tense fingers. He is the designer. And because the basis of decoration is pantomime, he weaves but the minimum of words through these episodes, developing them rather by curious groupings broken in outline by the mergence of white and black against the black and white of the background.

Capulchard. [After a pause, turning towards the Audience.]

This is a forest—that is a Grotesque.

You will find the forest somewhere in your thought.

Its trees are graphic like an arabesque;

The pale moon shines—I touch it with my hand.

I dip the water from the brook beneath,

And fling it high among the leaves like dew.

The effect is there, although the fact is not;

So shall all things here seem—illusory.

Who cares—who knows what brook is in his mind or in
yours?

It's the quintessence only that endures.
 The moon, that clear quintessence—see—is split
 To myriad moons by the brook, each moon like it!
 The moons are washed away—but there's the moon.
 Thus with design: I draw you these Grotesques,
 For your amusement spur them into—life?—
 Sign for thing signified, the hieroglyph.
 Give o'er philosophy to Beldame Owl:
 She thinks not; but you think the thoughts she should.
 How wise a counsellor!—if she does not hoot
 And break the illusion.

The Owl. [Softly.] Hoot!

Capulchard. The idol speaks;
 And thence the abode of wisdom is transferred.
 Its seat is now, I dare say, in the moon
 Till sunrise. . . . Open the picture-book.
 The first design—a song: these be the words.

[*Capulchard makes a sign towards the Woman who, inert, is behind the screen on the left. She lifts her head and sings as if without consciousness.*]

Woman. [Singing at left.]

With body enwrapped in a mantle light,
 Softly a-down the shadowy night,
 Lo, the moon 'neath overlaced branches white—

[*The song pauses for a moment while he takes the Crone from behind the screen on the right, gives her a staff, and places her within the edge of the decoration, whereof she at once becomes a part.*]

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Capulchard. [*Resuming his former position.*]

In counterpoint, enter a stooped Grotesque.

Tell where goest thou, Crone.

Crone. [*Crossing.*] To a palace that's dark.

Capulchard. The grave?

Crone. I know not: I am blind, stone blind.

Woman. [*Continuing her song.*]

White birds on the white-branched, motionless trees,

Two by two. Dark my steps fall faint, Japanese.

Love am I; I am hate: yet know nothing of these.

Capulchard. Thou art old: read the song. She is young.

Crone. Time is naught,

When it's past and the staff seeks no light o' the moon.

Capulchard. Frail withered leaf—the first November
wind—

[*Exit the Crone, who, upon reaching the edge of the
decoration, becomes inert and sinks down limply behind the
screen.*]

The song: full-throated, dark, and passionate.

Her lover?—No, we'll save the pencil-stroke.

Woman. [*Continuing her song.*]

My beloved awaiting me, swift toward the spring

I approach!

Capulchard. There is silence.

Woman. The kiss that I bring—

[*Capulchard has pushed the Crone back. He now lifts
the Woman, clad in a dark mantle edged with white, and
places her at the edge of the decoration. She enters.*]

Grotesques

The kiss—to the mocking-voiced echoes I sing.

[*An interval. To herself, in a slow monotonous voice.*]

Warm path by the stream, thou art chill to-night.

Phantom shadows—weave—

[*She glides off, right, and sinks down inert.*]

Capulchard.

Her voice glides past

Like it was she—dark, sinuous delight.

Expressive outline bound her beauty fast.

Therewith she and the episode stop short.

Inceptive decoration: play it out

Each as you will, the sequence unenslaved.

It's naught to these Grotesques, unconscious strings

Scraped into melody, but else inert.

And yet, why hunt your pleasure to its death?

Ignore the ending, trace a new design.

Black background, disc of the moon: create—a Sprite.

Whose presence makes this wood an eerie place.

[*He goes right and, lifting the Sprite, a curious black and white figure, brings it to the edge of the decoration.*]

There's little trick to the supernatural.

Sprite. Tiptoe a-tread, through the wood, by the brook,
the Sprite enters—oh, ho!

Dance, crinkled stream!

Ha!—a dragon-fly poised upon air!

[*Blows.*] Begone.

[*Reflectively.*] It is night.

[*Bowing.*] Madame Owl,

Hoot! to-whoo!

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The Owl. Hoot!

Sprite. Brisk maker of shadows, clown moon!

[*He stands grimacing at it; then, upon a gesture from Capulchard, he begins with arms and fingers a shadow-dance, rapid and spontaneous but wholly conventionalized. There are of course no shadows.*]

Quick, clown moon—make them faster!

[*Capulchard abruptly stops him on a posture at the extreme left.*]

Capulchard. The dance proceeds, conventioned in a pose. Yet the design wants counterbalance. . . .

Here to the right I'll place the Girl-motive.

[*He lifts the Girl from the receptacle, right, and places her at the edge of the decoration, giving her at the same time a conventionalized symbol representing a bird. She enters, in the controlled and exaggerated manner characteristic of the grotesques, her movements wholly conventionalized and idyllic. Her costume, predominantly white, remains constant through all the episodes. Capulchard, at once developing the possibilities of the design, directs the notice of the Sprite to her.*]

Girl. [*To herself, motionless.*] Who am I that come,
Caressing tenderly the sign of bird?

A Girl, in white, alone, beside the pattern brook
I wander without fear, of fear not having heard.

Capulchard. Meanwhile—

Girl. Upon this sward beneath these trees I rest, and say:

Sweet bird, here bathe your wings where the pure white
lotus flowers dream

Prettily.

Capulchard. [*To the Audience.*]

Hark: the bird sings—

Girl. With éclat . . . With éclat . . .

Capulchard. I gave her that phrase out of character.

She looks—

Girl. [*Seeing the Sprite, who stands hungrily erect poised to leap towards her. She is struck motionless.*]

'Neath the moon . . .

Capulchard. [*Holding them apart in a pause which he carefully guards.*]

Note

How sensitively to the artist's will,
Even the minutest shade, the figures drawn
Respond. Though tense the moment, yet the crux
Seems somewhat too abrupt. If we instead
Design her as if thrall'd by fantasy,
Bound by the spell of her own wayward longing. . . .

[*Her expression changes from fear to eagerness. Capulchard places on her robe one or two conventionalized black leaves. He then extricates the Man from among the Grotesques, left, gives him a bow, and places him at the edge of the decoration. Capulchard steps back, almost invisible against the wood.*]

Man. With tread firm and taut deep through this strange
wood fearless come I,

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Hunter of mighty beasts, by prowess conqueror, else slain.
One arrow unsped yet left sole in my quiver.

Capulchard. [*Designing, as she cowers from the Man.*]

Having crossed, he turns.

But she, who shuns release from love of dreams—

Girl. Go hence.

Man. Are you a mortal maiden that dread less
This place than—?

[*Sees the Sprite.*] Ah! . . .

Capulchard. The tragic primitive.

Sprite. [*Triumphantly.*]

She's mine. Come, spirits!

Capulchard. Portray ghosts by effect.

Against the black—

Man. Black ghosts! White!

Capulchard. Against white.

Man. [*Recoiling.*]

Pale phantoms—four—three—five . . .

Girl. Fright him, dear dreams!

Capulchard. [*Thoughtfully, as the Man turns to flee.*]

His movement outward draws discordant line;

Courage would make the rhythm more compact.

Stand, therefore!

Man. [*Made to assume toward the Girl an attitude of
protection which would surmount his own fear.*]

Therefore, I stand.

Capulchard. His courage wakens love.

Sprite. [*Beckoning her, as she turns from him.*]

He cannot hold you—

[*A pause: then the Sprite snaps his fingers indifferently.*]

Man.

They are gone.

Sprite. Forth I follow the brook—to the end—where a pixie—

[*Exit. Outside the frame he falls inert.*]

Capulchard. The end is not far distant either way;
To left, to right, the picture has an edge.

Girl. [*Passing her hand across her brow.*]

How came I to this forest?

Capulchard.

We'll omit

The anti-climax, princess—the routine
That ends all well. Instead, a love-theme weave,
A tapestry of passion darker-toned:
Placing the Woman-motive in her stead,
Re-draw the Man as Warrior—.

Girl.

Ever then

You will protect me?

Man.

From all danger.

Capulchard. [*Grasping the Girl*] Come!

[*He replaces the Girl inanimate among the Grotesques, right; then he returns to the Man, who now is alone on the stage, giving him a mantle and sword instead of a bow. As he does this, the Man, by a great unconscious effort, tries to reach towards her. Capulchard is surprised, but smiles ironically. The impulse dies.*]

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Capulchard. A mantle, then a sword: thus achieve
strength,
Intelligence, rank, power, and the rest
That give a warrior capability
To lead an army to a city's gates.
And she, the daughter of his foe—

*[He lifts the Woman, giving her a costume that suggests
a princess; and places her at the right edge of the decoration.]*

Capulchard. *[To the Man.]* Adjust to rhythm of the
new design.

Man. The shout of battle has ceased from the darkened
plain;
Black swords now no more clash in a white sky.
Here shall I rest till dawn, not victor while
Their four-walled city holds unvanquished.

Woman. *[Holding out her hands towards him.]* Forth
from the citadel I bear a gift.

Man. Would it were thou!

Woman. Desire as thou wilt.

*[To herself, of the city which love had tempted her to
betray to him.]*

No longer am I peril of my realm.
No barrier lies between my will and me.

Man. Go!—lest that, weary after battle, I—
[A pause, which leads to a new grouping.]

Man. This bank shall be our bed,
O my beloved!

Woman. This brook shall be the music of our night.

Man. The lotus shall yield wine,
O my beloved!

Woman. Perfume of drowsiness—desire—

Man. Thou to the might of my love captive—

Capulchard. Translate the rhythm from their words to
deeper silence.

None draw the erotic quite as Beardsley could.

Yet strange this governed transcript of a mood

They cannot feel, while you—. Disquietude?—

Sex-love? The theme's not false. Is it you prefer

Tang always? Well, then chance shall wreck their love.

Woman. Though I am lost, my realm I've not betrayed,
By opening our strong-walled city's gates
To bring thee—

Man. [*Forcing her from him, with a vitality of rhythmic
line which suggests will-effort.*]

To thy realm thou shalt return.

Quick! lock thy beauty by a thousand bars,

That my one longing may give armies strength

To find my way to thee.

Woman. That strength is vain—
The dawn shall tell them that from thee I come.

Capulchard. Disaster. Climax. Let us turn the page,
New-motive her as Queen, the Man as one
'Neath even her scorn, an Outlaw. Meanwhile, say:

Woman. The dawn shall tell them that from thee I
come;

And they will send me forth an outcast, shamed.

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[*Capulchard with his hand touches her as she moves to the edge of the decoration, right.*]

What art thou? . . .

Man. Stay—I will spare thy realm.

Woman. Dawn blackens. . . . [*She falls inert.*]

Capulchard. [*After a pause.*] That every episode must
this way end

Limits the rhythm like a clash of line,
Breaking it by mere harsh irrelevance.

Man. She does not answer. Where?

Capulchard. An afterglow?

Searching? Interpret as avoiding search.

Thereby our Outlaw, fleeing.

Man. [*Uncertainly.*] They hunt me—Warrior . . .

Outlaw . . . She is lost . . . I . . .

Capulchard. [*Concealing apprehension.*] Let the theme
Create me ex-officio spectre. Appear!

Man. [*Recoiling, in the grotesque manner, in response to a direct gesture from Capulchard.*]

What figure tense, dark-robed, phantom against the dark?

Capulchard. [*Resuming his mastery.*] The Outlaw, baffled
in his strength, aghast

Stares—seemingly, since he is a Grotesque,

And by good fortune to his self-respect,

Insensible. But, with the tang you crave,

As I no less, being vicar, rhythm's restored.

Man. He speaks to someone.

Capulchard. Ha!

Grotesques

Man. [*As before, vaguely, to himself.*] He speaks to someone.

Capulchard. Does the marionette grasp at its strings?

Man. [*Slowly and with effort, but turning directly towards Capulchard.*]

You speak—

Capulchard. [*To the Audience.*]

Howe'er this lead, exit waits poised
Whereby to render him inert.

Man. [*With increasing persistence.*] You speak.

Capulchard. To those who see you make to disobey,
Who come to observe that which you would resist,
For whose regale the decoration's wrought—
The Audience.

Man. Gods! . . .

[*After a moment of indecision, he kneels slowly in an attitude of worship before Capulchard, at a distance from him.*]

Capulchard. Eh! what's this?

Man. Gods look upon us?—He has seen the gods!

Capulchard. I speak with them.

Man. [*Faltering.*] They answer?

Capulchard. [*After a pause.*] They are there.

Man. High priest!

Capulchard. [*To himself, not without self-consciousness.*]

True, I address the gods.

[*He steps aside.*]

Man. [*Left kneeling to vacancy, looks up.*] Vanished!

[*He rises, devoutly.*]

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'Tis holy ground: an altar I will raise!

[He shapes the stones into a rude altar. Capulchard smiles, holding the design in rhythm.]

I will give thanks unto our gods and plead

Of them protection: I am their Grotesque;

I will be strong and bold.

Capulchard. [Placing the convention of fire on the altar.]

Not strength from you,

But cowardice, an Outlaw, they require.

Man. [With proud fear.] Hid in this forest at their
will I lurk.

Capulchard. The courage of the willing sacrifice;
The mannikin in uniform, his pride.

[He goes right and, lifting the Woman, places upon her shoulders the white mantle of a Queen.]

At the scene's edge, a crown upon her brow,

She stands . . . Contrasted motives . . . Soon shall she
Recoil in terror. Would you have her speak?

[To the Woman.]

I'll give you utterance of what you are.

Woman. A Woman—in her eyes the sign of grief;

A Queen, who walks in solitude, gravely.

Within her heart who knows what sorrows mourn?

Who knows what sorrows still? . . . She comes.

[She sees the Man and starts back, in a conventionalized movement, suggesting dread with her body. They look at one another. A silence. A change comes over the Woman. She closes her eyes.]

Grotesques

I feel a strange unfolding as from sleep.
Look at me, longer.

Man. You are beautiful.

Woman. Why do you cower from me?

Capulchard. [*Without irony.*] Puppet Queen.

Man. [*Proudly.*] Ay; and the gods have me their Outlaw made.

Woman. [*Re-acting to the decoration.*]

The dread of capture held his eyes to mine.

Man. I love.

Woman. That dagger bright wakes—

Capulchard. [*Dexterously.*] Fear. Perhaps,

Conscious a bit, they might have further tang;

There's naught more pliant than a little fire.

Man. [*Helplessly.*] 'Twas the gods' will—we've pleased them—they—

Woman. Alas, that I am royal!

Man. [*Harshly.*] Stay!

[*Capulchard makes a gesture that separates them.*]

Woman. [*With a gesture of great tenderness, gliding back repulses the Man.*]

.

[*The Man looks at Capulchard.*]

Capulchard. Turn not aside to ask the obvious.

Are you not Outlaw?

Man. [*Trying to explain.*] Ay, the gods—the gods—

[*Capulchard does not answer, but places the Girl at the edge of the decoration, right. With a gesture he causes the*

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Man, in conventionalized movement, to creep back into the forest, left.]

Capulchard. There was a theme, had it been wise to risk,
That for her he had slain the King; and she—
But no.

Woman. [*Who has started to speak to the Girl.*]

Such was I once: I will not wake her.

[*Exit the Woman, right. She falls inert.*]

Capulchard. [*Relaxing.*] However, now they are no
more extant.

Dismiss them out of memory: behold,
Amid the night-sounds of the forest, enter
The Girl-motive.

Girl. [*Expressing fear.*] Only the cold white trees
And the silver moon, and rippling thin at my feet,
The slender glint of the zigzag brook,
Clear waters fleet.
I, alone in the darkness, lost. Who
Is that, tall—? Ah—

Capulchard. I'll hedge her with a storm!
Uprise the rushing sound of wind.

The Owl. To-whoo!

Girl. An owl-cry!

Capulchard. Blunder storm-phantoms blind.

The Owl. To-whoo!

Girl. They scream!

Capulchard. 'Tis the rattle of branches.

Girl. Save me!

Grotesques

Capulchard.
Shelter.

Seek

[*He places a cloud-pattern across the moon.*]

Veil of the moonlight. Quick: ere the flashing streak,
White fire, shall speed ignition to the clouds and form
A fusion with their black genetic strength!

[*He abruptly unrolls a sharp white streak of lightning
against the sky. With éclat.*]

The storm!

[*The Girl, with highly elaborated gestures expressing fear,
sinks down. Capulchard takes the fire from the altar.
Silence, to imply the presence of the storm.*]

Loud roars, through the thick-pouring rain, thunder.

[*At each imagined sound of thunder, she trembles.*]

Fears throng her heart, terror to her supplied
By your fecund imagination.

Girl.

Oh,

Take down the storm!

Capulchard. Therein she doth abide
As in a fortress. Let the storm be past.

[*He takes the clouds and lightning down.*]

From shelter creep, symbols of forest things.

Girl. I now exclaim: Lead me hence, someone! help me!
I am lost.

Capulchard. Footsteps, then.

Girl.

Hark!

Capulchard.

Of whom?

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[*Capulchard lifts the Crone, placing her at the left edge of the decoration.*]

I'll honor you with their attention.

[*As she hesitates through weariness.*] Forth.

Crone. I heard two voices, one of them a maid,
If she be young enough. Where are you, dear?

[*Silence. She wanders toward the right, the Girl crossing, frightened, in rhythmic contrast.*]

I had these words to speak—are you afraid?—

About warm love: old age comes soon . . .

[*A pause.*]

I dare not leave the stream-side. She will learn.

Teach her, whoever it be.

Capulchard.

So—

Crone.

Capulchard?

[*Exit the Crone, right. She falls inert.*]

Girl. [*Designed as if frightened, but a little curious.*]

What would she teach?

Capulchard.

White cheeks to flame and burn

Till all their fire is dead.

Girl. [*Repeating.*] To flame and burn. . . .

[*Capulchard shrugs his shoulders; then, striding left, he takes a handful of water-drops from the brook and flings them into the sky beside the moon. They become seven conventionalized white stars.*]

Capulchard. A curtain cannot be: the play goes on;
Scene follows scene, must follow without pause.

Grotesques

[*He turns reluctantly to the Man, who lies inanimate outside the frame. Subtly, glancing at the Audience.*]

I'll put his consciousness in fealty.

[*He lifts the Man, clothes him in a monastic garb, and places him at the right edge of the decoration. In his hand he places an actual, brilliantly colored flower.*]

He shall forget the Woman-motive now.

Garbed mind has use: it keeps the scene intact.

Man. [*Sometimes intoning.*] Behold the ancient altar of
this wood.

I cannot quite remember—yet there was

Someone: it was not you.

Capulchard.

Though she is fair.

Man. It seems I've journeyed here from far away,
From distant plains, great cities, o'er a sea
Where the waves are alternate black and white,
And a black sun shines in a chalk-white sky
Flecked by dark clouds and birds, black, soaring high;
While over the sea ride chequered ships
With white sail fastened to ebon mast.
The ports they make are cities vast,
With spires, minarets, and domes,
All black and white.

Here first the very presence of the gods.

Girl. What have you in your hand?

Man.

An offering.

Girl. [*Standing very close to him and looking at the flower.*] This flower is not real like that one.

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[*Indicating the conventionalized lotus.*]

Man. No; it lives.

Capulchard. The lotus is like time, misunderstood.

Girl. And here and there it's neither black nor white.

Man. I know not what that is, which came as I
Fashioned the petals. Gift of the gods, a seal
Of their benignity.

Girl. I like the gods.

Man. [*Turning towards the Audience.*]
The gods watch over us, they guard us well;
They have no other thought but for our good,
And not a bird-sign falls but they behold it.
Place now this flower humbly on their shrine;
Your hands are pure and stainless as the light
Reflected to the moon and seven stars.

Girl. You like my hands?

Man. [*His tone changing.*] Why do I find you here?

Capulchard. That theme has character; I'll give her words.

Girl. It is dark night, and I had lost my way.
But now that you are come, I do not care.
We are alone: the gods seemed so far off.

[*She takes the flower, crosses with delicate conventionalized movement to the right of the altar, and kisses the flower. She starts slightly, but does not speak until she has placed it on the altar.*]

The fragrance—withered.

Man. [*Not heeding his words.*] 'Twas acceptable.
Night and the stars, and silence in the wood.
And she—

Girl. What do you mean?

Man. I love you.

Girl. Then

You will not do me harm.

Capulchard. She creeps away.

[*The Man, gaining control of himself, kneels penitently beside the altar.*]

Somewhat a climax, if we quickly pass.

We'll take her off, though that is dangerous;

Scenes must progress.

[*The Girl creeps into the forest, right. Capulchard stands at the edge of the decoration as she falls inert. Presently the Man looks up. A pause.*]

Man. [*In remorse.*] Forgive me—oh, forgive!

I know that I shall never see her more.

Beyond this length of forest all is void.

How can the gods stand by and see so fair

And innocent a creature perish, yet

Raise not one hand to help her or restrain?

Do they snatch joy from her unhappiness?

[*Capulchard places the Woman at the right edge of the decoration.*]

Nay, they are gods: their silence must have cause—

Immortal life!

Woman. Death would not then be true.

[*The Man turns abruptly.*]

Man. Who are you that have strength to look at grief?

Woman. I know grief's pain, the memory's garnering.

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Capulchard. Swift let the past sweep backward from
their ken,
Completed.

Man. They might will the past restored,
Did we appeal, humbly. . . .

[*He looks in mute appeal towards the Audience. A
pause. His hope breaks. Capulchard smiles.*]

Capulchard. The gods are kind, but wish to be amused.
Obey the decoration: be not like
The marionette who learned that there were strings
And, seeking independence, severed them.

[*A silence. Capulchard has removed the monastic garb
from the Man.*]

Woman. If I, knowing sorrow, could teach happiness—

Capulchard. Await the tang: their search will yield you
tang.

Brief shall the scene be, so with stress designed.

Man. You were their answer.

Woman. Yes. [*She starts.*] Gods kill at last. . . .
All moods of life in turn sweep through my heart.

Each sings a moment, passes, and is gone,
Like winds of evening, winds of night, and dawn.

Man. Your heart is not inconstant—

Woman. Not my heart.

There is a mystery; I know there waits . . .

Man. Our love, deep-grounded in the roots of life,
Eternal—

Woman. Flee: I bring unhappiness!

Capulchard. Has he learned not transience? Let them weave the theme.

Man. One weapon—craft. We'll make our own design.

Capulchard. Shadows who'd swing the moon.

[*The Man draws her into a pose suggesting two lovers. This becomes the motive of the design.*]

Man. [*As, with a glance at Capulchard, she yields.*]

Victory!

Capulchard. [*Surprised, grimly.*] How slight
A breath would puff them pell-mell into space,
And free the canvas for a different theme!

Woman. [*After a long pause.*]

Seize in this one embrace our happiness;
Swift to my lips!

Capulchard. [*Designing.*] Now, duty. What, n'importe!

Woman. [*Quietly, looking past the Man to Capulchard.*]

I know that you must leave me.

Man.

Now?

Woman.

The while—

That love may so be perfect; ere the gods
Destroy; and return to—find—me—

[*They move to the right edge of the decoration.*]

Dearest . . .

Man.

Wait . . .

[*He turns aside, left. She smiles, looking upward. Her smiles becomes ecstasy.*]

Capulchard. [*Abruptly.*] The tang!

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[*He touches her upon the shoulder. She steps quietly from the decoration. The Man turns. A very long silence. Capulchard watches the design with interest.*]

Capulchard. [Filling the silence.] Dynamic.

[*To the Man.*] In the will lies no redress.

[*He grasps the lotus from the stream and offers it to the Man.*]

Taste of the lotus; it's forgetfulness.

[*The Man unconsciously, in deep thought, wanders into the forest, left.*]

Capulchard. Thus ends revolt. If they should strive once more—[*To the lotus.*]

(Re-grasp the brooklet)—doubtless they will strive:

Nietzsche implies a *Götterdämmerung*;

Grotesques are something that must be surpassed.

But you, their gods, for whom they are create—

Ultimate critics in Olympian chairs—

Shall laugh at their weak struggle to be—gods?

Therefore, we'll give them incarnation now,

Though many interludes suggest themselves,

War-themes, the Lithuania—. We've warned.

[*He takes the Woman from where she has fallen, right, and places her at the edge of the decoration. Speaking to the Audience, but she hearing.*]

If still, untamed, they catch at the design,

First like a net it shall them close enmesh,

Then you may strike, almighty gods, by me.

Let her be Woman, Temptress; he—a Knight.

Grotesques

[*He places the Man, not in a knight's costume, at the left edge of the decoration. The Woman crouches at the right.*]

Man. I wove a path here swiftly through the trees;
Did not a voice call to the great white road
In peril?

Woman. No.

Man. It was your voice I heard.

Woman. [*Seeing the opportunity for a double rhythm.*]
Mine was a voice in silence crying, "Stay!"

Capulchard. [*To her.*] That misses character.

Man. The lifted voice
Of all down-trodden pleads: "What right hath love?
Save us!" And therefore I adventure forth
With deep reluctance. We must part, bravely.

Woman. [*To him, directly.*]
Part, that you may seek quest where search is vain,
Beyond the decoration. . . .

Man. Your glory foredoomed ever to suborn!

Woman. Think not of that: yield if I tempt thee.

Capulchard. [*Misinterpreting.*] Good.

Man. False to ourselves?

Woman. The gods will welcome it;
That gives their picture zest.

Capulchard. [*With a look at the Audience.*] They blas-
pheme you.

Woman. Our honor, nay, our love, they have made sport
To thrill them. I am set to tempt, that they

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May see you false, if yet our baffled love,
Again reincarnated, plead unslain.
There is no duty greater than our love.
Yield: let them relish it.

Man. They'll hear us.

Woman. Ay;

And let them. Cruel, they are powerless,
Except to gaze. You love me: let them gaze.
Why heed their laughter or their froth of tears?

Man. [*Indicating Capulchard.*] But—he—?

Woman. Their priest? He too seeks but design.

Man. [*Cynically, with elaborate care for the design.*]
I strive: my strife is futile, and I yield.
[*He reclines beside her.*]

You were alone.

Woman. I needed you so much.

[*After a pause.*]

We must have strength.

Capulchard. [*To the Audience.*] Enjoy: what reck their
words,

So the design lead whither it was planned?

A little, and they forth shall fly in space,

After the manner of created things,

To plead you mercy: I will see to that.

Man. What does he mean?

Woman. [*Knowing well.*] It is some threat perhaps.

Capulchard. If we could draw remorse—

[*Going quickly to the right edge of the decoration.*]

Grotesques

The Girl-motive.

Woman. My lover!

Man. We have found our buried life.

Fear not; they only see—what matter?

Capulchard. [*Designing.*] Voices . . .

Voices. [*Without.*] Come: we call. . . .

Man. No, No.

Woman. [*Muttering to him, as he glances at the Audience.*] Beyond is naught,

Except the gods.

Man. [*To her, terrified.*] Do you not feel their eyes—
Eyes that stare, waiting? We were happy. . . .

Voices. [*Without.*] Come . . .

Capulchard. [*To the Audience.*]

They hear the voice, but only in your minds.

That was a symbol merely: this is—fact.

[*He has lifted the Girl, right. She stands for an instant; then, with conventionalized movement, turns towards the Man.*]

Girl. [*As always, controlled.*]

Alas, not lost, nor slain? Even that were best,

Rather than find you false to the gods' will.

They tell you to go forth. It might be you

Could save all decoration.

Woman. Save? Thereby . . .

Girl. [*Staccato.*]

His going would depict altruism.

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Man. [To the Woman.]

She does not know. Nor we—surely—

[Looking towards the Girl almost in the manner of the
early Grotesques.] Beyond

The decoration there is naught—that's real.

Except the gods . . .

Capulchard. [Not without disappointment.]

The good will conquer.

Woman. [In passionate defiance.] Us,

Our love, our life, for the pleasure of strengthless gods,

If there be—

[She stops. The Man, with a conventionalized movement, is approaching the Girl. With a sharp cry.]

No! it is revolt, concealed!

Man. Those ancient, staring eyes that will outlive

The moon and stars compel us to submit.

Capulchard. The puffed-up bubbles burst.

Woman. [Looking toward Capulchard.] Whatever we
do

Ends as he planned.

Man. [*Apart.*] Once more, unhappiness.

Woman. [To herself.] Now we may conquer hope, and
end all fear.

[*To the Man.*]

Unhappiness? I ask no less from them.

Man. [After a moment.]

What would you have me do?—I have betrayed

You, even her, our love. This, penance:

[*Turning front.*] I
Am a Grotesque; we will no longer bow,
The prey of gods!

[*He destroys the altar. A pause.*]

They have no answer—ha!—
Nor power. They can only stare. Hear,
O ye gods who brought us into life,
We fling defiance: give us freedom!

Girl. [*Horror-struck.*] Oh! . . .

Capulchard. They shall have freedom, even as they wish,
Freedom beyond their wish, freedom complete,
And even the gods shall hesitate to laugh.
We'll pause, merely to mend the broken rhythm.

Man. We must stand firm. . . . I cannot save you.

Woman. No.

[*Capulchard brings the Sprite from the right edge of the decoration. At Capulchard's direction, the Sprite bends towards the Girl.*]

Girl. [*As the Sprite seizes her.*]

Ah, catch me not so!

Sprite. I have you for myself!

Capulchard. [*With a glance at the Man.*]

Thus far: forever, if there come no help.

[*A silence that brings the design to complete stagnation. A pause. The lights of the auditorium are very slightly illuminated. A pause. The lights diminish and go out.*]

Man. Mercy!—not mercy from them: hate!

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Capulchard. [*Himself awed, in a whisper.*]
At last the gods!

[*Capulchard looks at the Grotesques. He smiles.*]
What matter? Let the end be dexterous;
Then to new canvas and a different theme.
Backgrounds are many as the stars themselves;
And these Grotesques would seek a wider range,
A third dimension, something—infinite.

Girl. Pray to the gods.

Woman. [*Gently.*] Yes; offer them a prayer.

Capulchard. Now like a daemon of dread power, vast
To their small eyes, but small to me myself,
Lo, I take down the moon, erase the stars.

[*He does so. There is no less light.*]

Man. It is the end: I love you.

Woman. We have loved.

Capulchard. Caught in the void: we'll sweep the canvas clear.

New decoration, say, by Alastair.

For naught is permanent—excepting change.

[*He tears away the background and goes out, leaving the stage a void filled by a strange diminishing light, which penetrates beyond into the surrounding nowhere—an emptiness in which the Grotesques, including the Crone, whom he flings forward with the others, move vaguely. A pause.*]

Girl. Have mercy upon us! . . .

[*A long silence. Curtain.*]

Cloyd Head

NOTE ON GROTESQUES

Mr. Cloyd Head's brief tragedy, which we have the honor of presenting this month to our readers, was first produced on the evening of Tuesday, November sixteenth, 1915, at the Chicago Little Theatre; the director, Mr. Maurice Browne, enacting *Capulchard*. Our illustrations are from photographs of this production, and they are published through the courtesy of the Chicago Little Theatre.

The play ran three weeks, the initial cast being as follows:

<i>Capulchard</i>	Mr. Maurice Browne
<i>The Woman-motive</i> .	Miss Gwendolen Foulke
<i>The Man-motive</i> . . .	Mr. Knowles Entrekin
<i>The Girl-motive</i>	Miss Miriam Kiper
<i>The Sprite-motive</i>	Mr. Edward Balzerit
<i>The Crone-motive</i> . . .	Miss Winifred Cutting

(In printing the play, the word *motive* has been omitted to avoid the monotony of repetition.)

As POETRY said editorially last January:

One could hardly say too much for the beauty of the presentation. But that was to be expected, for Mr. Browne, poet and dramatic artist that he is, is perhaps the only manager who could work out with complete delicacy the pictorial and theatrical subtleties of the theme. Already those of us who love the poetic drama are deeply in his debt.

An enthusiastic word should be added for the beauty of Mr. Raymond Johnson's part of the production. Scenically this play was a new and difficult problem, whose fit solution required a man of daring vision and delicate instinct for line and balance in decorative design. In many earlier Little

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Theatre productions Mr. Johnson had shown rare ability and originality as a scenic designer, as well as extraordinary taste and ingenuity in producing new and strange effects with fixed or changing lights. *Grotesques* might have been ruined by a scenic artist less sensitive to conventionalized rhythms in background, costumes, and the posing of figures.

The author, the director, the assistant director (Mrs. Maurice Browne) and the scenic designer, all artists of creative and adventurous imagination, had the joy of working in perfect harmony, the vision of each inspired and fulfilled by the others. And the actors, thus led and inspired, worked in perfect harmony with these four, emphasizing, by every pose and intonation, the delicate conventionalized rhythms of action and dialogue.

The result was a memorable performance. If some of the spectators were disconcerted by the strangeness of it—unable to dissociate their minds from ordinary theatrical experiences so far as to enter into the poet's mood, others found in it that rarest and most poignant of all delights—an experience of complete poetic beauty, one never to be forgotten so long as life endures—or so long, perhaps, as art preserves her annals.

H. M.

The author adds the following word:

I wish to say two things with regard to this play: first, to add my own high appreciation of the artistry and insight which the Chicago Little Theatre brought to the making of the production; and, second, to ask the indulgence of the reader for certain obscurities inevitable to a play designed wholly for the theatre. The episodes are conceived as pantomime, the words being often a rhythm superimposed upon that pantomime.

C. H.

EDITORIAL COMMENT

THE FUTURE OF THE MAGAZINE



OUR years ago this month *POETRY* began. At that time the magazine was an experiment, a lone adventurer into a new field. A great art was neglected, even ridiculed; was in need of, not only a defender but an aggressive spokesman, an organ. Whether *POETRY* has fulfilled this function we will leave to its friends, or even to its enemies. The most casual observer cannot fail to admit the extent of the change during these four years, both in the spirit of the art and in its position before the critics and the public. And no informed person can fail to admit that the new movement, the new vitality, has been stimulated chiefly by this magazine and the currents of influence which have issued from it.

It is therefore a question of immediate importance whether the magazine is to continue after its initial period is over. The financial arrangement which made the experiment possible was a five-year guarantee fund of a little over five thousand dollars a year, donated to the cause by more than an hundred lovers of the art. This fund, which still amounts to more than one-half of our annual income, has enabled us to pay our contributors, and to keep abreast of office expenses, the rising cost of printing and paper, an ever-increasing correspondence, and all the incredibly numerous details of publication.

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As a business enterprise, however, POETRY is as yet far from independent. Its annual reports to the guarantors have shown steady and sure progress, but progress too slow to put the enterprise on its feet by October, 1917. Indeed, the present editor thinks that financial independence should not be expected: poetry, like the other arts, deserves and requires not one but many endowments, and this particular endowment, far from diminishing, should grow, in order that the work, so enthusiastically begun, may be still more effectively carried on.

Many of our guarantors, under the generous impulse of this feeling, have already expressed a desire to continue their contributions for a few more years. Others, however, feel, rightly enough, that they have done their share; or, in some cases, even more than they could reasonably afford. We therefore appeal more generally to all lovers of the art, all who wish to encourage its production and promote its public appreciation and influence.

Will not YOU, therefore, become, by contributing ten dollars a year, a Supporting Subscriber of POETRY? Thousands of public-spirited citizens in our various cities pay that much, or far more, to support institutions of art, orchestral societies, architectural schools, etc.; and certain journals of political or social opinion have enrolled hundreds of Supporting Subscribers at the same rate. YOU are a lover of poetry: will you not do as much to support a magazine in its interest? A roll of five hundred Supporting Subscribers would contribute as much as one hundred Guarantors. Like

The Future of the Magazine

the Guarantors, they will receive the magazine monthly, and once a year its report. We strongly urge YOU—each individual reader—to give us this evidence of your support.

If, however, you are not financially able to be either a Guarantor or a Supporting Subscriber, you can at least help in the good work by getting us one more subscriber. If each reader of POETRY will become a subscriber, and each subscriber will each year enroll one more, we shall be self-supporting before another five-year period shall have passed.

Do YOU wish POETRY to continue? Will YOU be partners with us in the effort to extend its life and increase its power?

H. M.

THE CHINESE CHANTING OF THE CLASSICS

In one of Mr. Yeats' books—*Thoughts on Good and Evil* I think it is—he gives an account of the method of chanting poetry in use by the early Irish bards. These bards, he says, deliberately pitched the speaking, not the singing, voice in definite if irregular intervals. He illustrates it with a magical setting in this style of a short poem of his own from *Countess Kathleen*.

It is interesting to compare this method of Irish bards with the system of chanting the classics in China, a system which was doubtless in use before the days of St. Patrick and which flourishes among scholars today.

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To be able to *be*, or chant from memory, a large part of the *Book of Odes*, is an essential to a classical education in China, and every scholar of the old school falls automatically into the chant when asked to recite them.

Unlike the Irish bards the Chinese use the full singing voice in their chanting, and the tunes they use have a much more definite melody than that recorded by Mr. Yeats. Yet it is in its essence much the same thing, a loose, flowing chant which varies from individual to individual and from moment to moment as the exigencies of the poem and the emotions of the singer dictate.

The rhythm of the chant is very definite, though more complex than the usual song rhythm with us. This follows the rhythms of their verse forms, which, unlike the Japanese, have a system of scansion much like our own, a system in which the quantitative element in English poetry is replaced by the accentual element inherent in the vocal tones which distinguish the Chinese language. The usual stanza in Chinese is four or eight lines in length, each line having five or seven syllables—the whole being as definitely set as to rhyme and rhythm scheme as a villanelle with us.

With the help of Miss Elizabeth Hammond, the violin-cellist, I am able to set down here the tunes used by two scholars in reciting a famous four-line poem, *Spring Evening*, by Su Shih (1036-1101).

The literal translation, which seems to me to give the taste of Chinese thinking better than any formalized version, is this:

The Chinese Chanting of the Classics

Spring evening, one moment, price thousand gold.
Flowers have fresh odor, moon has shadow.
Singing, piping (comes from the) balcony floor, fine, fine.
(Children are) Swinging in the garden; evening drips, drips.

The words in parenthesis are understood. The last three words mean that the water in the water-glass which is recording the evening drips and drips.

The poem is a *tsüeh* beginning in the *Ping* tone, and the metrical skeleton is as follows. The *Ping* is the low, even tone, and the *Tseh* includes the other three tones of the Chinese language, which are all higher and sharper than *Ping*. *Tseh* is therefore higher and louder than *Ping*, but there is no difference in length. The first, second and fourth lines rhyme.

Ping ping tseh tseh tseh ping ping
Ping tseh ping ping tseh tseh ping
Ping tseh ping ping ping tseh tseh
Ping ping tseh tseh tseh ping ping

In setting down the chants which follow we have perhaps put them slightly out of joint, as the intervals of the Chinese scale do not correspond exactly with the arbitrary intervals of our "well-tuned clavichord". But we have tried to remedy this by placing an L, for lower, and an H, for higher, over certain notes to indicate that they are between the note written and the half-tone next above or below. There are also numerous slurs, quavers and grace-notes which we have not been able to render exactly, but some effect of the whole may be gained from these transcriptions, particularly if given *glissando* by the voice or a stringed instrument.

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First Tune

Tshung siau ih khuh dzeh tshien kyung

Hwo yeu tshing hyang yoeh yeu iung

Koo kwen leu de sung sien sien

Tshieu tshien yoen loh ye dzung dzung

Second Tune

Tshung siau ih khuh dzeh tshien kyung

Hwo yeu tshing hyang yoeh yeu iung

Koo kwen leu de sung sien sien

Tshieu tshien yoen loh ye dzung dzung.

It will be seen that the rather complex rhythm scheme is identical in the two chants, and that they bear some general

The Chinese Chanting of the Classics

thematic resemblance one to the other, although the details may vary infinitely, the same man singing the same poem differently at different times. The general effect of the monosyllables, each one of which is a word, is clear and nasal in quality, with the soft yet nasal *ng* sound of the French language much in evidence.

It is interesting to think of the probable effect on an Anglo-Saxon audience of reciting one of our own classical lyrics, say Herrick's *To Daisies, not to shut so soon*, in this oriental fashion. The "closeness of the Chinese soul", of which Carl Sandburg writes so assuredly, has decidedly its limitations.

Eunice Tietjens

A JITNEY-BUS AMONG MASTERPIECES

A type of criticism coming into vogue lately is of the subjective or pseudo-impressionist variety, imitative of the leisurely mode of the mature minds of certain distinguished French critics. But the minds of those in this country who affect the method are anything but mature—in years or in experience. Having accepted as their motto Anatole France's remark that criticism is a soul's adventures among masterpieces, it does not occur to them that it may make some difference whether the soul is, or is not, well qualified for the adventure. I often feel, when reading such criticism, as if I had been asked to take a jitney-bus sight-seeing tour through a metropolis of masterpieces—or near-masterpieces, as it may happen. With these the guide is indifferently familiar, but *familiar* at any cost, and their *raison d'être* as

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explained by him is somewhat vague: "On the right, ladies and gentlemen, this is in a style I do not care for. On the other hand, this on the left means much to us. This I like. This, although very beautiful in its time, is impossible today. Why? But, of course, *you know!*"

For criticism of this type is no more exact than that. It does not "come to grips" with anything. (I have been waiting a long time to use that phrase; I have seen it in almost every article I have read for the last month!) In fact, nothing is easier than this sort of criticism, when there is no real thought back of it. It is, often, only too obviously the product of a lazy mind; a lazy mind that tries to protect itself by affecting a knowingness that covers ignorance and inertia. For it is not necessary, in this type of criticism, to have any background whatever.

All criticism is, of course, subjective and personal. But it only becomes of value through the critic's attempt to relate his subjective and personal feelings to the objective qualities of the work criticised. If he does not so relate it, his personal reaction is of no value whatever.

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In this country we have a dire need of constructive or synthetic criticism. I do not like the term "creative criticism," as I think it is itself partially responsible for much of the delusion concerning the value of irrelevant and unspecific criticism noted above. Criticism may not be as parasitic as the mistletoe, but it adheres to the thing criticised as tenaciously as the bud to the tree. Otherwise it is not criticism,

A Jitney-bus among Masterpieces

not even creative criticism; it is something else. Pater's eulogy, for instance, of Leonardo's *Mona Lisa* is not criticism; it is an entirely separate literary performance, taking *Mona Lisa's* smile as a starting point. It is no more criticism than Keats' *Ode on a Grecian Urn*. The urn was a perfected work of art, and propagated another work of art, as art forms are capable of doing; but no one would claim that Keats was indulging in creative criticism.

However, I have no desire to indulge in an argument over this term, an argument capable of being prolonged indefinitely and never settled, like that other equally futile argument over the dividing line between prose and poetry. I merely wish to indicate that when a definite work is under consideration, as for instance in a review, constructive or synthetic criticism may not be arrived at through a shunting of the critic's responsibility for exact thought and exact expression in relation to the thing criticised. It is, rather, the direct result of these.

A. G. H.

ARMENIAN POETRY

The Armenian poems which follow appear in English for the first time. They are the lamentations of a race that, in spite of five centuries of subjection, remains one of the naturally poetic peoples of the world. These poems were not written by intellectuals but by untrained men and women whose inheritance for more than two thousand years has been poetic. During the turbulent and arid periods in Armenian history, when massacres and deportation brought

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political anemia, the poets have endured, have been the historians of their race.

The first poem, by a woman to her deported husband, is probably from the early eighteenth century:

Oh, my beloved, it is a dozen years since thou art gone.
I commence to lose the features of thy face . . .
I long to see thee again with mine own eyes;
But during all the twelve months of the year
Thou stayest yonder on the other side of the sea.
I stretch out mine arms like a bridge
On which thou may'st cross the ocean and return to me.

There have been women poets in Armenia, but their songs, during the last five hundred years, have been full of despair. An Armenian mother of the seventeenth century, in the following lullaby to her child, voices her own tragedy of subjection:

I sing a lullaby that in listening to
Thou shalt lie down and sleep sweetly.
Sleep, my child, and grow;
Grow and become a great man
Where there is no ruler. Be the ruler of thyself.
Enlarge thyself and become a village,
Become a dense forest
Forcing thy roots to the foundations of the earth.
Force thy roots into the foundations of the earth,
And let thy trees cast all about thee
The shadow of their branches.

Another poem, a quatrain in its original form, is of unknown date. During the seventeenth century a group of women living in Eghine in Turkish Armenia became celebrated for the gentle lyric melancholy of their verse, and this poem is attributed to that period:

He is not dead, thy son, he is not dead,
He has gone away into the garden.

Armenian Poetry

He has gathered roses, and in pressing them against his face
Has been lulled into sleep by their soft perfume.

In Armenia the *trouvère* still fills the office of publisher to many poets, and by his singing in the streets of the villages and towns gives to the people the poetry of the nation. Djivani, who died only a few years ago, sang of his wandering brotherhood:

The *trouvère* is a bird without wings,
Today here, tomorrow there.
Sometimes devoured by hunger and by thirst,
Again the favorite of fortune,
He goes, he comes, never ceasing to roam.
Today here, tomorrow there.
He is, in the shadow, a shining wing,
A cloud propelled by the wind.
In quest of vain hopes
Djivani stops nowhere
In cities or villages—
Today here, tomorrow there.
Until his death he will live thus
Fluttering about as a bee,
Today here, tomorrow there.

Kate Buss

REVIEWS

POET AND THEORIST

Goblins and Pagodas, by John Gould Fletcher. Houghton Mifflin Co.

Of the first poem of this volume, *The Ghosts of an Old House*, Mr. Fletcher says in his preface:

I have tried to evoke, out of the furniture and surroundings of a certain old house, definite emotions which I have had concerning them. I have tried to relate my childish terror concerning this house . . . to the aspects that called it forth.

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This he has done skilfully. Now and then, possibly out of too literal an adherence to the image, possibly from mere paucity of image, the effect is scanty and incomplete. And infrequently the spell is marked by a certain lack of taste, a clumsiness; in the manner of the gossip who tells too much, or tells it with two great relish. Despite these flaws, out of the weave ghosts do take shape and live—ghosts both ordinary and strange, whimsical and fearful—of that indeterminate life existing between men and the objects about them. This house, with “its six white columns,” and “the nine great windows of its face” “stared into by uncivil, ancient trees,” does exist, perhaps not as inevitably as the house of Usher or the castle of Golaud, yet by some kindred magic. Its story, in the best of the poems, proceeds out of an economy of language, a delicate adjustment of word to word, of verse to verse, that maintains the line of rhythm, and makes of the poem a shapely thing—like a vase from which flowers rise beautifully.

The second section of the book, *Symphonies*, seems a less simple matter. To refer again to the preface, these poems aim “to narrate certain important phases of the life of an artist . . . each phase in the terms of a certain color or combination of colors.” The first of these, *Blue Symphony*, spreads life before one in a rare pattern of words, certainly marked by new genius. Day and night, gardens and waters, the palace and the temple, “foot passengers in scarlet,” pilgrims of autumn, treasure lying in the marsh grasses, and the distant “blue mountains of death”—these symbols ar-

range themselves with clarity and measure, and flow together as if some great Japanese had used them in a landscape. Readers of POETRY will remember the cadence:

The darkness rolls upward.
The thick darkness carries with it
Rain and a ravel of cloud.
The sun comes forth upon earth.

Palely the dawn
Leaves me facing timidly
Old gardens sunken:
And in the gardens is water.

Sombre wreck—autumnal leaves;
Shadowy roofs
In the blue mist,
And a willow branch that is broken.

Oh, old pagodas of my soul, how you glittered across green trees!

Blue and cool:
Blue, tremulously,
Blow faint puffs of smoke
Across sombre pools;
The damp green smell of rotted wood;
And a heron that cries from out the water.

The *Green Symphony* likewise, though tonally not so perfect, paints with fine motion and freshness the intoxication of flowers, clouds, winds, lakes, pine forests, light and air. *Black and Gold* contains two or three swift notes of the city at night. And always one finds from time to time, in *White Symphony* and *Blue and White* especially, beautiful moments, poignant notes of color and sound, and now and then a lyric with the value of this one:

Autumn! Golden fountains,
And the winds neighing

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Amid the monotonous hills:
Desolation of the old gods,
Rain that lifts and rain that moves away;
In the green black torrent
Scarlet leaves.

But, except always for the first and third symphonies, Mr. Fletcher goes, in these poems, where I, for one, find it irksome to follow. It is not that he loses the gist in the image, as some wag has said "these imagists" do, but in a wild concatenation of images, in which adjectives play too insistent and meticulous a part, especially those denoting color. Sometimes for pages, it seems, he allows no noun to appear without its blue-white, gray-green, strong red. To me, even after a repeated use of the guide in the preface, these dramas of the soul in terms of color lack life and motion, become turgid, and dry almost to choking. The artist "runs out like the wind," "no one can hold him," "races between the gray guns"; birds fan him with hot winds; rugged waves of blue-black water lash him, lap him, dash him, do not let him rest a minute; a howling sunset, a shrieking storm assail him; fierce whirling swords spit and stab; his lungs and heart fight for air; appalling scarlet sears his eyes. And yet with all this, one only gets the sensation that dreams give, of violent effort and no progress. To borrow from Frank Tinney, Mr. Fletcher "put it over, and it lay there."

I wonder if this failure is not due to a courting of the impossible, if he has not sought to build a system out of too elusive intuitions, and so has foundered in abstractions. The same tendency to depart from the concrete is apparent in his prefacing discussion of poetry—a tendency to generalize,

which, Blake bluntly says, is to be an idiot. He tells us, for example, with an eye always to modernity, that "no sincere artist cares to handle subject matter already handled and exhausted," forgetting that Æschylus, Euripides and Sophocles made use of the same ancient stories; and that anyway, manner and matter being inseparable, talk of "subject matter" is not pertinent.

Wouldn't it be well for the poet to leave to the litterateur all this solemn elation over "the new art," "the new poetry," "the new technique"? Why worry about it? The great artist inevitably is neither conventional nor hackneyed; lesser men are certain to echo him, and then follow the echoes of the echo, and so on to emptiness. Why clamor and admonish? The story will remain the same—great art always unsolvably old and new, as established as mathematics, as surprising as the spring. Possibly some one of "the new school" is already echoing Mr. Fletcher, and some of his verses distinctly owe their piquancy to the old device of rhyme:

Owls flap in this ancient barn
With rotted doors.

Rats squeak in this ancient barn
Over the floors.

Owls flap in this ancient barn
Rats' eyes gleam in the cold moonlight.

There is something hidden in this barn
With barred doors;

Something the owls have torn,
And the rats scurry with over the floors.

Dorothy Dudley

POETRY: *A Magazine of Verse*

A SOLDIER POET

Le Prisonnier des Mondes, par Jean Le Roy. Société d'Éditions Mansi et Cie., Paris.

Amid the masses of to-day's poetry of detail heaped high on every editorial desk, from an ode to an egg-shell found in an alley, to reflections upon suspenders hanging in a shop window, it is at least a change to come upon *Le Prisonnier des Mondes*, by Jean Le Roy, one of the younger French poets and a soldier who took part in the great offensive in Champagne. This poet signals to us from high places. His themes are the elements, which possess him, whirl him about, till he is occasionally in danger of losing his balance. True, he may write about a tramway; but he is less concerned with the tramway than with what he sees from it—fleeting houses, landscapes. He likes to write of the open, with its sounds and sights, and does not tire of looking at life, which builds of cells wonderful animate structures. He handles cosmic laws vastly and impersonally. Must these great facts be always related to the human, the personal, in poetry? I think not. Poems of nature, when they are warmed by the human appeal, are perhaps those most lingered over; yet it is good to feel the wide coldness of the elemental forces. Not that Le Roy's work is heedless of the human pulse; but he sees in the heart of a man the heart of all creation.

Instant de Clarté, the opening poem in the little paper-bound book, whose titles, all told, number only eight, is interesting from a wide point of view:

Je sens, comme un fantôme,
Derrière moi,
Un homme
Plus grand que moi
Et qui pèse sur mes épaules;
Et puis derrière, un autre;
Et puis, derrière celui-là
D'autres hommes échelonnés;
Et puis, toujours plus grands, des géants en sommeil
Qui de moins en moins éclairés
Par le soleil,
Se reculent dans l'ombre:
Mes ancêtres depuis les premiers temps du monde.

This will make you want to go on. The poet sees, now before him, others, small at first, then smaller, dwindling to smaller still, and others, ever others, who are his son and his son's sons. They fall asleep in the past or plunge into the future, till at last there is but one existing conscious being—himself. As in the foregoing quotation, throughout his poems Le Roy uses rhyme.

Danse des Globes is beautiful with sounding language, though it may contain a few misapplied pictures. We like to accept this invitation at the outset: "Let us ascend into the oak-trees, the oak-trees, balmy as houses, by the twisted stair-way of branches; let us ascend in the whiteness of evening, let us gather on the flat roofs of evening, as gathered the herds of Chaldea." And behold, we find ourselves amid the rolling and crackling of worlds:

Et nous, ainsi que des pâtres de la Chaldée,
Nous regardons danser, nous écoutons la danse
Des globes,
La pluie des globes autour de la terre,
Fille endormie qui rêve parmi l'azur,
En tremblant, d'une folle chute!

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Le Roy has written poems not contained in this volume. I have seen some of his trench poems, and they all reflect the strength and sincerity of one who really knows. In *La Chair et l'Acier*, which was printed in the *New Republic* for June 10, 1916, the poet draws a striking contrast. He describes the days when a young man felt pleasure and pride in his muscles, as he trod the smooth pavements of Paris, or swam in pleasant waters, not yet conscious of the frailty of his own body; and then he pictures the days of a bombardment. Now at last he apprehends flesh, flesh that could once shiver luxuriously at a beautiful strain of music, or thrill with delight at some dear memory. He describes with the bold truth of an artist in words the pitiless steel as it cuts with monstrous ease into lithe, white, adolescent flesh:

Jeunes corps confiants jadis
Sur le bitume de Paris.

But even lovelier is this poem, which we quote entire, as it will be new to our readers, having been printed only in an extremely limited edition of a rough little trench paper:

PRINTEMPS

Des pétales jeunes, frères, lisses,
Pleuvent sur un coin d'ombre du tennis.
Dans une allée, les jeunes filles ont oublié
Leurs chapeaux de jardin.

Vous nous gênez, les fusains,
Nous qui jouons au croquet,
Vêtus de bleu, soldats français.

Dans ce printemps très clair où le canon s'entend,
Nous sommes là, dans ce printemps,

A Soldier Poet

Jouant ensemble
(Et l'azur tremble),
Nous sommes là, jouant ensemble,
L'employé du Crédit Lyonnais,
Le tourneur et le professeur,
Le carreleur
Le mécano et le typo,
Les deux petits merlans
Et moi aussi, dans ce printemps.

Les minutes pleuvent lentement
Comme les jeunes pétales blancs,
Comme les bombes à l'horizon.

Et c'est ainsi que va le temps
Plus précieux que les autres temps,
Celui qu'il faudrait arrêter
Pour l'écouter et pour le voir passer de près,
Non parce qu'un cœur à jamais
Pleurera sa fuite
Comme en son vieux parc Olympio
Ou Lamartine au bord de l'eau,
Mais parce qu'au bruit lointain des obus qui se cassent,
Ardente, étonnante, rapide,
L'histoire du monde se passe.

Jean Le Roy's work shows us what fine flowers are lifting
their loveliness to the scythe of war. A. F.

A STACCATO POET

Mushrooms: a Book of Free Forms, by Alfred Kreymborg.
John Marshall Co., Ltd., New York.

An insinuating, meddlesome, quizzical, inquiring spirit;
sometimes a clown, oftener a wit, now and then a lyric poet—
such is the author of this book. He trips about cheerfully
among life's little incongruities; laughs at you and me and
progress and prejudice and dreams; says "I told you so!"
with an air, as if after a double somersault in the circus ring;

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grows wistful, even tender, with emotions always genuine even though not too deep for momentary tears. And always, whatever his mood, whatever his subject or purpose, he is, as becomes the harlequin-philosopher, entertaining.

Mr. Kreymborg's "free forms" suit his temperament, and they accompany his thought fitly, with the delicate aplomb of a ukulele. As a rule they are extremely *staccato*, a movement that tires if one reads too many, though usually any incipient yawn turns into a smile. Who could resist the deftness of this bit of consummate wit—an epigram called *Life?*

I met four guinea-hens today,
Creaking like pulleys.

"A crrk," said one;
"A crrk," said two;
"A crrk," said three;
"A crrk," said four.

I agree with you cheerfully, ladies.

And here is another from the same laughing philosopher:

Tiny boy,
staring at me
with eyes like toy balloons:
That broom is much bigger than you—
put it down.
You won't?
Then don't put it down.

And I should like to quote also the divertingly true *I am four monkeys*; but that is already almost famous.

Are these poetry? Why not? Did not Horace write satires long ago, and successfully "put them over" with the Romans—yes, and with sober-minded professors of Latin

even to our own day? Are these not as much poetry as Pope's diffuse and ingeniously rhymed satirical skits, which were gulped down, though with wry faces, by the "wits and beaux" of that "Augustan age"? Is there no room for satire in modern poetic art? "Because thou art virtuous, shall there be no more cakes and ale?"

I own it doth amaze me to hear some critics solemnly reading the law against Messrs. Kreymborg, Eliot, Pound, and others whenever they indulge in contemporary satire. As if the muse must always march grandly to heroic tunes, or dance to approved classic measures, and never while away a more intimate hour, to steps of her own devising, among our own hidden and cherished frailties! These poets are witty in a modern fashion. They give us satirical verse of a kind more fit for our telegraphic age than Horace's sententious periods or Pope's ingenious couplets; but verse as well entitled to be called poetry as theirs in this kind.

I do not mean that Mr. Kreymborg is always a satirist. Even in his most serious moods, however, he keeps his light touch-and-go manner and his telegraphic, almost telescopic, style. His "free forms" are not always so good a fit for the serious as for the whimsical mood; their rhythms become as obvious in their way as certain familiar hymns are in theirs. But sometimes he does a thing worthy of that over-used adjective, exquisite, like this wistful *Dance*:

Moon dance,
You were not to blame.
Nor you,
lovely white moth.
But I saw you together.

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Again, as in one or two of the group *To My Mother*, a feeling delicately tender is set to soft music. *Entity* perhaps came by wireless, yet I find it not quite unworthy of the muse:

I am.
And you.
And atoms.
Censure?
Forgiveness?
Why?

I should like to quote *America*, which rather bravely suggests the big swinging march of a young nation, but I must stop with one more, and that one a portrait, *Cézanne*:

Our door was shut to the noon-day heat.
We could not see him.
We might not have heard him either—
resting, dozing, dreaming pleasantly.
But his step was tremendous—
are mountains on the march?

He was no man who passed,
but a great faithful horse
dragging a load
up the hill.

H. M.

SOUTHERN SONGS

Plantation Songs and Other Verse, by Ruth McEnery Stuart. D. Appleton & Co.

These are negro dialect songs of the best type, gay, humorous, rollicking and tender, full of sympathy and rioting with color. It is safe to predict that some of these, for their human qualities of mirth and patience, will be chanted and

Southern Songs

loved in nooks and corners of the earth for many a long year. If Mrs. Stuart's place were not already secure this book alone would endear her to the hearts of the people.

Her serious poems, for the most part devotional, are unfortunately not so successful as the plantation songs. The best of these, *Sitting Blind by the Sea*, is already familiar to readers of POETRY.

But Uncle Remus himself might have written the negro songs!

E. T.

NOTES

Mr. Cloyd Head, author of *Grotesques*, was born in Illinois in 1886, and has lived for the past fifteen years in suburbs of Chicago. He is a graduate of the Northwestern University, of Evanston, Illinois.

Mr. Head is an unusually self-exacting artist. He has written poems and plays before the one now published, but, with rare austerity, has destroyed them. He is now engaged upon another poetic play, also symbolic, and also adventurous in its demands upon scenic art.

BOOKS RECEIVED

ORIGINAL VERSE:

The Garden of the Idle Mind, by Isabel Moore. Privately printed.

The Roof of the World and Other Poems, by Henry G. Barnett. Sherman, French & Co.

The Little God, by Katharine Howard. Sherman, French & Co.

Lundy's Lane and Other Poems, by Duncan Campbell Scott. George H. Doran Co.

Today and Yesterday, by Irving J. A. Miller. The Blakely-Oswald Co., Chicago.

Five Rimes of Five Nations in Time of War, by Allen Updegraff. Printed by the Maverick Press, to be sold for the benefit of Belgium.

Untravelled Trails, by Howard Hilles. Sherman, French & Co.

Heart Songs and Home Songs, by Denis A. McCarthy. Little, Brown & Co.

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Red Wing, by Frank S. Farquhar. Privately Printed, Planda, Cal.
Life and Living, by Amelia Josephine Burr. George H. Doran Co.
A Little Book of Verses, by Violet Leigh. Fremad Pub. Co., Eau Claire, Wis.

Collected Poems, by Arthur Peterson. G. P. Putman's Sons.

Tragedies, by Arthur Symons. The John Lane Co.

Songs of Daddyhood and Other Poems, by Albert Edmund Trombly. Gorham Press.

There Was a Time, by Anne Murray Larned. Richard G. Badger.

Journeys of a Soul, by Nathan Appleton Tefft. The Gorham Press.

Random Verse, by F. W. B. The Poet-lore Co.

Law and Love and Other Poems, by E. J. V. Huiginn. The Gorham Press.

The Golden Treshold, by Sarojini Naidu. The John Lane Co.

Doreen and The Sentimental Bloke, by C. J. Dennis. John Lane Co.

A Place in the Sun, by George William Allison. Riverside Pub. Co., South Bend, Ind.

The Caliph's Secret and Other Verses, by M. A. B. Evans. G. P. Putman's Sons.

PLAYS:

Layla-Majnu: A Musical Play in Three Acts, by Dhan Gopal Mukerji. Paul Elder & Co., San Francisco.

SPECIAL EDITIONS, ANTHOLOGIES AND TRANSLATIONS:

The Sonnets of Shakespeare: from the Quarto of 1609 with Variorum Readings and Commentary, Edited by Raymond Macdonald Alden. Houghton Mifflin Co.

The Cambridge Book of Poetry for Children, selected and edited by Kenneth Grahame. G. P. Putman's Sons.

Heine's Poem, The North Sea, Translated by Howard Mumford Jones. The Open Court Pub. Co., Chicago.

PROSE:

Studies of Contemporary Poets, by Mary C. Sturgeon. Dodd, Mead & Co.

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